

Good afternoon Mr. Secretary and members of your staff. Thank you for taking the time to visit our very beautiful north state and asking for input from the residents here for their vision for agriculture in California.

There are many topics that are very important that I am sure others will address today. I would like to speak to one particular subject that is of deep concern to me as a fourth generation Californian. I was born in Hanford, in the heart of the agriculturally productive San Joaquin Valley. I have been a resident of Shasta County for 34 years. My husband, son and I are very active in farming and ranching in five north state counties and are passionate about improving and preserving the lands we own and manage.

My concern centers on the amount of solid waste and litter that is found in our fields, pastures and the illegal dumping that we find along our roads. I spend many hours every month picking up garbage and trash in our fields and pastures. As our population increases, the problem will only become worse unless we develop an awareness of the problem and spearhead an effort to curtail this current trend. The California Department of Food and Agriculture has a stake in the future of our environment and the importance of making sure that we are good stewards of the land.

My vision is to develop a campaign to educate and implement plans to heighten the awareness of the current habits of our farmers, ranchers and farm laborers to make sure that this state is in better condition in 2030 than it is today. Our state has instituted campaigns before, such as "Pitch In". I would like to see the agricultural community make it a priority to become a leader in the movement to clean up this state and make it a better place to live. We need to be leaders in this movement and set the example as good stewards of the land.

My plan would include:

- Develop an education program for farmers and ranchers and their labor force about the detrimental effects litter and poor sanitation issues have on our environment. This program would be easy to incorporate into the current farm safety programs. These programs should be bi-lingual so they can be available to all members of the agricultural community.
- Develop a curriculum to be offered in schools about agriculture and the importance of producing healthy food and fiber. Reaching young people today ensures that the next generation will be aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy environment and being responsible citizens.
- Contact such organizations as the Almond Board, the Rice Commission, the California Cattlemen's Association, the California Ag Leadership Foundation, and the Farm Bureau, just to name a few, and encourage their participation in this campaign. Develop partnerships with large and small farming and ranching operations so that this movement is a collaborative effort. With the entire agricultural community cooperating, we could make a huge impact on improving our environment.

- Make garbage cans and dumpsters with the campaign's logo more readily available on farms and ranches and encourage people to use them regularly.
- Institute incentive programs to encourage keeping farms and ranches clean and free of debris. An "Adopt the Roadside" program would include each farming or ranching operation to be responsible for keeping their land clean. Recognition in local communities by CDFA and local Farm Bureaus would help encourage producers to maintain an unpolluted environment.

My father always taught me to leave things better than I found them. Our family believes we are responsible for improving the land where we work and ensuring that future generations can enjoy the beauty and bounty that surrounds us. I would like to ask that you consider some kind of plan that would make this possible.

If there is anything we could personally do to be of assistance to you on this subject, please let us know.

Thank you very much.

Mary LaSalle-Rickert

Prather Ranch